

**Environmental Assessment****Title: Lower John Day River Canyon Commercial Hunting Guides****EA Number: OR-054-03-077****Date of Preparation: July 9, 2003****Name and Location of Preparing Office: Central Oregon Resource Area, Prineville, Oregon.**

**Conformance and Consistency:** The proposed action is consistent with the following land use plans: Two Rivers RMP, June 1986, and the John Day River Management Plan, February 2001.

**Purpose and Need:** The Lower John Day River Canyon provides habitat for various species of game animals for which the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) sets and regulates hunting seasons, including the number of tags issued for large game. In recent years, the bighorn sheep population in this area has become very healthy and the tags are highly sought after. Hunting for deer, elk and upland game birds is also popular. Reports of successful trophy hunts in this remote, rugged area have led to a public demand for hunting with a commercial guide. Hunting guides wishing to use public lands for this type of commercial enterprise must be authorized by the BLM. To date, the BLM has authorized guided hunting in this area by existing authorized river guides only, with access by boat. Access via upland routes has not been authorized, although unauthorized commercial guiding is known to have occurred. The public, ODFW and some hunting guides have asked the BLM to issue Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) for guided hunting with authorization to access the John Day River Canyon area via upland routes. The Lower John Day River Canyon area includes three Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) which are managed according to BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1).

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The proposed action is to issue up to ten commercial hunting SRPs, as determined by the Authorized Officer, with authorization to operate on public lands within the Lower John Day River Canyon with access via upland routes. (See attached map.) Two or three SRPs would be issued initially, with the option to issue additional SRPs (up to a total of ten) in the future based on monitoring results and public demand. Special Recreation Permits would be administered according to BLM's Recreation Permit Administration Policy and Program Direction (H-2930-1). Permit terms and stipulations contained in the BLM Manual H-2930-1 and in the Guidelines for Commercial Use of Uplands in the Prineville District (1995) would apply to the SRPs. Among other requirements, the stipulations require the guide to provide to the BLM a copy of written permission to cross or use any private lands, and require compliance with Leave No Trace techniques. In addition, special permit stipulations specific to these SRPs would limit camping to private lands. This area includes three Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's); North Pole Ridge (OR5-8), Thirtymile (OR5-1), and Lower John Day (OR5-6). BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1) would continue to guide all activities within WSA's.

**Alternatives:** No action is the only other alternative considered.

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Environmental Impacts			Affected		
Critical Elements	Yes	No	Critical Element	Yes	No
Air Quality		X	T & E Plants		X
ACEC's		X	Tribal Concerns & Treaty Rights		X
Cultural Resources	9/7/03	X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid		X
Environmental Justice		X	Water Quality, Drinking/Ground		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Floodplains		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
T & E Animals		X	Wilderness		X
T & E Fish		X	BA 7/14/03		

RM 7/14/03  
HM 7/14/03

### Description of Impacts:

The proposed action would not change the level or time of use for hunting activities as this is established by ODFW. Wildlife habitats would not be affected because human use numbers would not change. Commercial use of the public lands would be administered according to BLM's Recreation Permit Administration Policy and Program Direction (H-2930-1). Commercial guides would have requirements for environmental protection that are greater than for individuals using public lands. These additional requirements include camping on private land only. Access within WSAs would be by foot or horse except on authorized vehicle ways. Violations of vehicle regulations, especially in WSAs could result in cancellation of an SRP. The proposed action would conform to the non-impairment criteria for management of WSAs and would be substantially unnoticeable. The level and type of human use would not be expected to change within the WSAs, thereby preserving the opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. There would be no change expected in populations, hunting pressure or habitat of bighorn sheep, a WSA special feature as described in the BLM Oregon Wilderness Study Report, Vol. 1, 1991. Other special features of the WSAs would not be affected. The proposed action would help control cross-country vehicle travel by holding guides accountable and would therefore be expected to improve the wilderness quality of the WSAs. The proposed action is consistent with the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (recreational opportunities) of the John Day Wild and Scenic River.

**Impacts of No Action:** The level and time of use for hunting activities would stay the same. Unauthorized commercial guiding would likely continue. This unauthorized use would be unregulated and not monitored, without oversight to insure the protection of WSA and other resource values. The government would not receive revenue from unauthorized commercial activities occurring on public land, revenues which are reinvested locally in on-the-ground management of the lands where the funds were collected.

**Cumulative and Residual Impacts:** None are identified.

**Description of Mitigation:** All mitigations have been incorporated into the proposed action.

**Persons/Agencies Consulted:** ODFW

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Date : 7/9/03

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Date : 7/9/03

## Chapter 2 - River Segment Environment



Lower John Day Hunting Guides, EA # OR-054-03-077  
Hunting Area

